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S-E-C-R-E-T

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

18 October 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR THE UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

SUBJECT: Transmittal of Memorandum on "Security Conditions in Saigon"

1. In the absence of a formal request for a SNIE, the Director of Central Intelligence asked that this Memorandum be prepared on security conditions in Saigon in the context of the Vice Presidential trip.

2. The Memorandum has been sent to the Vice President, the White House, the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Chief of the Secret Service. The Director made clear to the addressees that the paper represented CIA views.

3. I forward this copy for your information.

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SHERMAN KENT
Director
National Estimates

DISTRIBUTION A

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C E N T R A L I N T E L L I G E N C E A G E N C Y

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

18 October 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Security Conditions in Saigon

NOTE

Vice President Humphrey is scheduled to attend the 30 October inauguration of President-elect Nguyen Van Thieu in Saigon. Mr. Humphrey will probably be in the Saigon area from 30 October to 1 November. We do not know of any plans for visits to US troops outside Saigon or for other travel in South Vietnam.

There has not been a request for a SNIE on security conditions in Saigon. In accordance with past practice, however, we have prepared this memorandum to supplement Saigon reporting on security conditions relating to the Vice President's trip.

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C E N T R A L I N T E L L I G E N C E A G E N C Y

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

18 October 1967

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Security Conditions in Saigon

1. No doubt the GVN will take intensive security precautions to prevent Viet Cong sabotage of the presidential inauguration and National Day ceremonies. Nevertheless, despite a gradual improvement of Saigon's security in the past two years, the city remains part of a war zone. During Vice President Humphrey's visit, he will be a potential target of the clandestine Viet Cong apparatus in the capital. Previous attempts have been made by the Viet Cong on the lives of such US officials as Ambassador Nolting and Secretary of Defense McNamara, as well as the Embassy bombing in 1965. Government security forces rounded up two Viet Cong terrorist groups in Saigon earlier this year, but the recent bombing of the Chinese Nationalist Embassy attests to continuing Viet Cong capabilities in the capital.

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2. The Viet Cong have attempted to disrupt or discredit recent political activities in South Vietnam, including the national elections last month. They are likely to make another effort to embarrass the new government during its inaugural and National Day ceremonies. From one point of view, it can be argued that the Viet Cong would stand to lose more politically than they would gain by an attack on the Vice President, since it would certainly dramatize Communist terrorism and further would probably silence, if not convert, many of those who are critical of the US role in Vietnam. Strictly within the Vietnamese context, however, a successful attempt would be a severe blow to the prestige of the new government. Viet Cong leaders might thus conclude that unfavorable international repercussions would be outweighed by domestic gains. Finally, Viet Cong terrorist squads probably have sufficiently general directives which would permit them to initiate some kind of action during the forthcoming ceremonies.

3. Should it occur, a direct attack on the Vice President would most likely be attempted while he is occupying a stationary position well known in advance, such as at the inaugural ceremony or at the National Day parade. Various techniques have been

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employed by the Viet Cong in the past, including preset bombs, a "suicide" type assault by an armed squad or unit at close range, and more selective fire from a medium range distance.

4. In addition, the Viet Cong have demonstrated the capability to direct relatively long range mortar or recoilless rifle fire on general areas in Saigon. At last year's National Day parade, for example, the Communists shelled the general area of the official reviewing stand, missing attending dignitaries but wounding other parade watchers. Because of its relatively long range, this type of random fire is difficult to prevent, and the Viet Cong may employ it again this year.

5. Several groups in the non-Communist political framework, including students, militant Buddhist sympathizers, and some disgruntled politicians, may attempt to instigate demonstrations at the ceremonies to be attended by the Vice President. Attempts along these lines might not be directed specifically at the Vice President. Regardless of their design, however, demonstrations which resulted in disorder could embarrass Vice President Humphrey and further could endanger him, either by generating spontaneous violence or by creating situations favorable for Viet Cong terrorists.

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6. During recent weeks, the government has prevented any significant disorders from developing in Saigon. The validation of General Thieu's election by the National Assembly on 2 October, an act which was in some doubt for awhile, has also reduced broadly based antigovernment activity. However, President-elect Thieu plans to name major appointments to his cabinet before the inauguration ceremony, and this might produce another negative reaction from dissatisfied political groups, making the political atmosphere more volatile.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:

SHERMAN KENT
Chairman

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